

The Church of the Servant King
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Matthew
(Lesson SB-MT22)

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST (22:1-14)

1 Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. 3 "And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. 4 "Again he sent out other slaves saying, 'Tell those who have been invited, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast.'" 5 "But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, 6 and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. 7 "But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. 8 "Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 'Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast.' 10 Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. 11 "But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, 12 and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?' And the man was speechless. 13 "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 "For many are called, but few are chosen."

Summary of the meaning of this parable: This parable (as most of Jesus' parables) is designed to illustrate or teach a point of truth regarding the Messianic kingdom (i.e. the "kingdom of heaven" or the "kingdom of God"). The point of truth that Jesus is teaching is simply that those who had rejected the invitation to enter the kingdom of heaven (i.e. the Messianic kingdom) through the message of the gospel of the kingdom (preached by John the Baptist, Jesus and His disciples) would be destroyed by the armies that attend Christ's Second Advent prior to the establishment of the Messianic (Millennial) kingdom [e.g. Matt 24:29-31; 25:31]. Also, in association with the Second Advent and the attending battle, the invitation to participate is extended to Gentiles as well as to the Jewish people of Israel. Any unbelievers (the man without the wedding garment) will be destroyed and ultimately cast into the Lake of Fire at the Last Judgment.

Further points of analysis in support of this interpretation: There are other interpretations of this parable that have been made by dispensationalists and others which attempt to connect this passage with 1) a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; and/or 2) to interpret the casting "into outer darkness" to refer to the fate of unfaithful believers of the present dispensation. In the case of the latter, they are seen to not be participants in the Millennial reign of Christ, but their status during this period is not exactly clear. (See synopsis of the views of various theologians and writers to follow).

The destruction of Jerusalem did occur in A.D. 70 and represented the 5th Cycle of discipline (Lev 26:14-33) toward Israel for failure to accept the offer of the kingdom (e.g. Acts 3:19). However, to interpret the destruction in this passage to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 would require that the wedding feast (i.e. the establishment of the Messianic kingdom) follow that event. The destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was not related to the establishment of the Millennial kingdom and did not accomplish the purging of all unbelievers as is taught in this parable (verses 11-13) and as will occur during the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

The phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” is never used in reference to the Church Age Body of Christ believer. It is a phrase descriptive of the Jewish (and Gentile) unbeliever during the period of time that the gospel of the kingdom (i.e. “the kingdom of heaven is at hand”) was preached during Jesus’ public ministry. Unbelievers during that period will join other unbelievers of all dispensations at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennial kingdom (Re 20:11-15) and will be cast into the Lake of Fire after having been judged “according to their works” (Rev 20:13) which are not sufficient to save. [For a further analysis of this phrase “weeping and gnashing of teeth” see the chart and notes associated with our study of Matthew 8].

Other points of analysis of this passage which bolster this interpretation include the following –

- The “king” (verse 2, 7, 11, & 13) represents God the Father.
- The “son” (verse 2) is Jesus Christ.
- The “marriage” (verse 2) is the uniting of all believers on earth under the rule of the Messiah. Believers of prior dispensations rule and reign with Christ during this period [Heb 12:22-24; Re 3:21; 5:10; 20:4, 6] and Israel has a very prominent position among the nations once again [e.g. Is 2:1-4; 11:11-16; 44:21-28 among many others].
- The “servants” (verse 3) are the prophets and Jesus’ disciples who proclaimed the Messiah’s arrival, but who were rejected by the religious of Jesus’ day. See also Matthew 21:33ff.
- The “wedding” (verse 4) is the same as the “marriage supper of the Lamb” [Re 19:9] or the “wedding feast” that pictures the Messianic kingdom after the Second Advent of Christ.
- The “armies” are angels that will attend Christ’s Second Advent and defeat His foes [Re 19:14].
- The “murderers” (verse 7) are those unbelievers during the last seven years of the Age of Israel (Dan 9:24ff) known as the Tribulation who will persecute believers (even to the point of death for some [Re 20:4]).
- The “wedding garment” is the righteousness of God possessed by every believer as a result of trusting in Christ as the Messiah (Age of Israel) or trusting in Christ’s death as the payment for sin (Age of the Church). Both are in reality the same message with just a different emphasis on Christ’s person and work. Believers of all dispensations possess the righteousness of God. However, only believers of the Church Age are said to be in union with Christ.
- The man without the wedding garment is an unbeliever within the Age of Israel (specifically the Tribulation) who is discovered during that period between the Second Advent and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom of God on earth (Millennium). It is during this period that the Jewish believers are gathered to form a believing nation of Israel and Gentile believers have the privilege of participating in the joys of the Messianic kingdom. **Note:** The events associated with the Second Advent and the establishment of the Messianic kingdom do not all transpire in a second of time even though the Second Advent occurs in an instant of time. Over the course of several days to perhaps a month or so, the Second Advent will occur, the campaign of Armageddon will be concluded, and unbelievers (Jew and Gentile) will be culled out and destroyed while believing Israel is gathered. Believing Gentiles will be identified and allowed to enter the Messianic kingdom. They will be invited to attend the “wedding feast”. These are somewhat overlapping events in terms of sequence; therefore, it is indeed possible that an unbeliever could be identified during the period that the Messianic kingdom on earth is being established (i.e. the “wedding feast” is prepared) and cast out just prior to its inaugural event (i.e. the “wedding feast”).
- The “outer darkness” is the abode of all unbelievers awaiting the Great White Judgment Throne at the end of the Messianic kingdom and the conclusion of the Battle of Gog and Magog. [Re 20:11-15]

As I mentioned earlier in the notes, there are other interpretations of this parable from those of a dispensational perspective. I will chart out just a few below so you might get a better perspective regarding the other views and how they contrast and compare with the above. This analysis is not meant in any way to be critical of the motives or the spiritual lives of any of the men mentioned. Each of these men are admirable men who have only the purest of motives based upon my knowledge of them. Each has made a great contribution to many believer's understanding of Scripture. However, as I've said before, when a person teaches 99 points that are correct, it doesn't automatically mean that the 100th point will be correct. Evaluate each point on its own merits – not based upon the fact that other statements have been correct and supported.

Author/Reference	Synopsis of View	Points of Comparison/Contrast
<p>Jody Dillow – <i>The Reign of the Servant Kings</i>, pages 345-6, & 535.</p>	<p>Dillow connects the parable in this passage to Christians of the Church Age. The man without the wedding garment is the “Christian” who suffers loss of reward at the Bema Seat (2 Co 5:10; Ro 14:10-12) and the loss is defined to be rejection from the wedding banquet in the Messianic kingdom even though the unfaithful “Christian” is not completely excluded from the kingdom. On the same page, Dillow also makes the statement that “the invitation to attend is to be understood as an invitation to national Israel to accept Christ as Messiah.” The wedding garment is defined as righteous deeds of the saints (i.e. experiential righteousness in my terminology) and Dillow uses Revelation 19:7-8 to support that view. In my opinion, in his admirable attempt to defend the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer, Dillow has not <i>exegeted</i> this passage, but he has <i>eisegeted</i> in order to defend this doctrine. The sad thing is that the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer is not even in question in this passage based upon the interpretation I presented on the first two pages of these notes. Also, while it is true that CA believers who have been unfaithful during their time on earth will experience a loss of reward at the Bema Seat, the exact nature of that loss is not defined in Scripture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Believers of the Church Age will rule and reign with Christ during the Millennium. My understanding and Dillow's are consistent on that point. ➤ Dillow associates the loss of reward that the unfaithful Church Age believer suffers at the Bema Seat with the sorrow expressed through “weeping and gnashing” of teeth in this passage as well as not being allowed to participate in certain aspects of the Millennial reign, i.e. the wedding feast and ruling and reigning with Christ. He has been accused of advocating a type of Christian purgatory for unfaithful believers during the Millennial reign. ➤ Dillow views the wedding garment as experiential righteousness (righteous deeds). This conclusion is based upon the assumption that this passage references the Church Age when in fact, it has nothing to do with the Church Age. Also, this interpretation overlooks the fact that Age of Israel believers were considered righteous (in a Phase 1 sense) even though never said to be “in Christ” as is the CA believer. ➤ Dillow equates loss of reward for the CA believer with certain loss in the Millennium. While I agree that there will be loss of reward for the unfaithful believer, Scripture doesn't disclose the exact nature of that loss. A logical conclusion is that the loss equates to less ruling and reigning authority in the kingdom; however, there is no Scripture to support that statement. ➤ Finally, nothing in the context of

		this passage requires an understanding of the Church for its interpretation.
Lewis S. Chafer, Systematic Theology	Doesn't mention this passage in his <i>Systematic Theology</i> .	
John Walvoord, Prophecy Knowledge Handbook , page 362	Walvoord gives only very brief treatment to this passage. However, he does equate the man without the wedding garment to an unbeliever and states that "without salvation, it is impossible to go to heaven."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In another book (Major Bible Prophecies, page 386), Walvoord includes this passage (among other passages) in a discussion relating to entrance into the Messianic kingdom. ➤ Walvoord doesn't address the timing of the destruction of the city, i.e. A.D. 70 or the 2nd Advent. ➤ Therefore, my interpretation and Walvoord's interpretation of this passage seem to be consistent.
Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come , page 227	<p>Pentecost includes this passage (among others) in his discussion of the marriage or wedding supper. He defines the marriage supper as a "parabolic picture of the entire millennial age, to which Israel will be invited during the Tribulation period, which invitation many will reject and so they will be cast out, and many will accept and they will be received in." Because of the rejection of the invitation by Israel, many Gentiles are allowed entry into the Millennium.</p> <p>However, Pentecost's framework for interpreting the Gospels is more fully articulated in his discussion of Matthew 13. (See Appendix A).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The view that I presented in the first couple of pages of notes is consistent with Pentecost's interpretation. ➤ Pentecost doesn't specifically address the man without the wedding garment nor does he address the phrase "weeping and gnashing" of teeth in the Matthew 22:1-14 passage in this book. ➤ Pentecost doesn't address the timing of the destruction of the city.
Dwight Pentecost, Thy Kingdom Come , page 231	Pentecost's interpretation is consistent with that contained in his Things to Come .	
Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ , page 386	Pentecost's interpretation is consistent in that he relates this parable to the Messianic kingdom being offered to Israel. He provides a little more information regarding the requirements necessary to enter the kingdom, i.e. a righteous life not just the righteousness associated with initial faith in Christ and thereby sees a connection between the two at least as regards the Jewish believer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pentecost interprets the "weeping and gnashing of teeth" to relate to eternal judgment. ➤ However, he interprets the wedding garments to be related to "a righteous character and holy life", i.e. experiential righteousness. ➤ He doesn't address the timing of the destruction of the city.
The Bible Knowledge Commentary , editors John Walvoord & Roy Zuck. (Commentary on "Matthew" authored by Louis A. Barbieri), page 71.	The offer of the kingdom by Christ is in view. The wedding banquet portrays the Millennial Age.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The "weeping and gnashing of teeth" is seen as related to the eternal judgment. ➤ The destruction of the city is seen as related to A.D. 70. ➤ The "wedding garment" is interpreted to be related to experiential righteousness not righteousness associated with belief (Phase 1 imputed righteousness).
The Nelson Study Bible , footnotes, page	Virtually identical interpretation to the interpretation of <i>The Bible Knowledge Commentary</i> .	

<p>1615. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor, pages 456-457</p>	<p>This commentary is written more from a dispensational-covenant theological perspective; however the insight that it provides has proven valuable on many occasions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The allusion to A.D. 70 in regard to the destruction of the city is rejected. ➤ The "kingdom of heaven" is seen as having already dawned in spiritual form which is consistent with the amillennial perspective. ➤ The commentary avoids a specific interpretation of the wedding garments as either related to imputed righteousness (Phase 1) or experiential righteousness (Phase 2).
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Critical to the interpretation of this passage is the question which must be satisfactorily answered by any interpreter – Why would Jesus have even taught about the Church or the Christian to disciples and others within the waning days of the Age of Israel when absolutely every bit of His public ministry was focused upon presenting and explaining the Gospel of the kingdom? In addition, the context of this passage is set right in the middle of Jewish rejection and His ministry was to Jews first.

What's the harm and isn't this being inordinately divisive? When one's interpretation of Scripture is influenced by an incorrect paradigm, then all manner of distortion of the Church Age believer's application of Scripture can result.

THE ATTACK OF THE PHARISEES (MATT 22:15-22)

15 Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. **16** And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. **17** "Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" **18** But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? **19** "Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax." And they brought Him a denarius. **20** And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" **21** They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's." **22** And hearing this, they were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away. (Matt 22:15-22)

Unlike most of the Jews, the Herodians openly supported the reigning family of Herod and its pro-Roman bias. Little is known of the Herodians, but it is believed that they held that it was right to pay homage to Rome so as to obtain the friendship of Rome and other advantages. They were not a political party nor a religious sect. They differed from the Pharisees on this issue. The Pharisees opposed, but tolerated, Rome and all attempts by Rome to intrude on the Jewish way of life. A common enemy (Jesus) made strange bedfellows of the Herodians and the Pharisees. Later they even lie and misrepresent what Jesus said (Lu 23:2).

2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." (Lu 23:2)

Principle: The self-righteous person will always compromise integrity when his/her agenda is threatened and attempt to justify the means with the desired end result. (Example: the political/social agenda of certain politicians today).

THE ATTACK OF THE SADUCEES (MATT 22:23-33)

23 On that day some Sadducees (who say there is no resurrection) came to Jesus and questioned Him, **24** asking, "Teacher, Moses said, 'IF A MAN DIES HAVING NO CHILDREN, HIS BROTHER AS NEXT OF KIN SHALL MARRY HIS WIFE, AND RAISE UP CHILDREN FOR HIS BROTHER.' **25** "Now there were seven brothers with us; and the first married and died, and having no children left his wife to his brother; **26** so also the second, and the third, down to the seventh. **27** "Last of all, the woman died. **28** "In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife of the seven will she be? For they all had married her." **29** But Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God. **30** "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. **31** "But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: **32** 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." **33** When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching. (Matt 22:23-33)

As we have studied previously, the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. However, since their writings have not survived, little is known about them except what rival groups said about them. The Sadducees were aristocratic and dominated the higher echelons of the priesthood. They based their beliefs solely on the Pentateuch and did not accept the authority of any other Old Testament book. They also rejected the oral traditions that had grown up around the interpretation of the Law which the Pharisees (the common-man group) accepted. Rejecting the resurrection and an afterlife led them to a view that heaven would simply be an extension of those things on earth that men most enjoy. Therefore, they did not believe in rewards or punishment in the life to come.

These views put them in direct conflict with Jesus. No doubt, they found His teaching threatening their beliefs and power. Jesus presented Himself as the Messiah Who would rule in the coming kingdom and He challenged prevalent attitudes toward money and social status. Most likely, the question that the Sadducees pose to Jesus has been posed to the Pharisees on previous occasions. The law that is the basis of the Sadducees' question is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-6 and is known as the law of the levirate marriage.

5 "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6 "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. (Deut 25:5-6)

In His rebuke, Jesus quoted a statement that God had made to Moses at the burning bush in Exodus 3:6.

6 He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Jesus' point is that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died without any afterlife, then God would not have used the present tense "I am", rather He would have used the past tense "I was".

Also, Jesus refers to the status of angels in heaven because the Sadducees denied their existence. This was a double refutation of the Sadducees. The crowds certainly understood

Jesus' point for they were "astonished". Furthermore, Jesus presented His case from the Pentateuch which was accepted by the Sadducees.

THE ATTACK FROM THE SCRIBES (MATT 22:34-40)

34 But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. **35** One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, **36** "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" **37** And He said to him, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." **38** "This is the great and foremost commandment. **39** "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' **40** "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

To answer the lawyer's (the Scribe's) question, Jesus uses the passage that is the basis of the Jewish confession of faith called the *Shema*. This confession begins with the Hebrew word *Shema* meaning "hear" and is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Deut 6:4-5)

The blessings associated with the Law and the Shema are found in Deuteronomy 11:13-21. The word "Shema" is the first word in this confession and is translated "hear".

13 "It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, 14 that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. 15 "He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. 16 "Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them. 17 "Or the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you. 18 "You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 19 "You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. 20 "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, 21 so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens remain above the earth.

The Gospel of Mark adds that the Scribe responded that Jesus had correctly answered and that love for one's neighbor was more important than burnt offerings and sacrifices (Mk 12:32-33).

32 The scribe said to Him, "Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM; 33 AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." 34 When Jesus saw that he had answered intelligently, He said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions. (Mk 12:32-34)

Jesus responded that he was not far from the kingdom. Evidently, Jesus struck a chord in this man's heart. Mark also added that from that time forward, no one dared to ask Jesus another question (Mk 12:34).

JESUS TAKES THE OFFENSIVE WITH THE RELIGIOUS CROWD (MATT 22:41-46)

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: **42** "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "The son of David." **43** He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, **44** 'THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, "SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I PUT YOUR ENEMIES BENEATH YOUR FEET"'?"

45 "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" **46** No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question.

Jesus asks the religious leaders to identify the Christ. Jesus' response to their answer indicated that the Messiah had to be more than the earthly son of David since David ascribed deity to Him (Ps 110:1). In that Psalm, David referred to the Messiah as "my Lord." His critics were completely silenced.

1 The LORD says to my Lord:
"Sit at My right hand
Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." (Psa 110:1)

APPENDIX A

J. DWIGHT PENTECOST – THE INTER-ADVENT PERIOD – AN INTERPRETIVE MODEL THAT HAS LED TO MISAPPLICATION OF CERTAIN PASSAGES

J. Dwight Pentecost introduced a new inter-dispensational age that he termed the "mystery form of the kingdom" in his interpretation of Matthew 13. Pentecost defined the "mystery form of the kingdom" to be the period between the Advents of Christ and "is composed of saved and unsaved alike (wheat and tares, good and bad fish)."¹ This became part of the interpretive model of many students of Dallas Theological Seminary during the 1960's to the present.

The problem is that it interjected a lack of clarity regarding the distinction between God's program with the Jewish people and the nation of Israel and God's program with the Gentiles during the present age. This affected the interpretive model of many and established (or reinforced) an interpretive precedent the result of which is the misapplication of truths associated with a Jewish-centric dispensation to the present Gentile-centric dispensation.

After this adjustment to the interpretive framework or model, each successive use of it by theologians continued to establish a precedent that extended to other passages. The interpretive model that included an inter-advent era consisting of both Jewish-centric and Gentile-centric dispensational programs became the foundation upon which passages with soteriological (Phase 1) and experiential sanctification (Phase 2) implications were interpreted. From the wrong interpretation evolved wrong application. Specifically, the parables of Jesus that should be interpreted relative to the Kingdom age of God's Jewish-centric program are instead interpreted relative to the present Gentile-centric Church Age.

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervon, 1958), 143.